

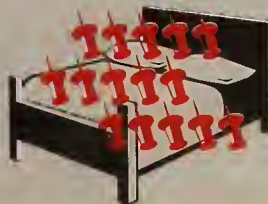
INNIS HERALD

MONTHLY FIELD REPORT. VOLUME XLIII., NO. II., OCTOBER 2007.

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GILLES VIGNEAULT

TIFF 07

GERMAN VERB WHEEL

CHRIS CORSANO



THE
INNIS HERALD

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PRÉCIS

- &c « *His Gothic screen adaptation of Suddenly, Last Summer, featuring Elizabeth Taylor, homosexual-cannibalism, and the name Sebastian wretched over and over again from its limber cast* » (p. 2).
- &c « *Nobody else who took the interview before me was asked about their girlfriends, and nobody who was interviewed after me got asked either* » (p. 3).
- &c « *Though one might conclude that The Passion of Christ rivals this Scorsese gem with regards to its date potential, they should be wary of such a bold statement* » (p. 3).
- &c « *C'est Gilles Vigneault sorti de son pays de réalité et de rêve, de joies et de peines, pays de son enfance, de ses amours, de ses souvenirs* » (p. 4).
- &c « *The spectrum of sound that Corsano engages in both personally and collaboratively is linked by its passion and ingenuity, regardless of genre* » (p. 6).
- &c « *It's not like one documentary is going to make me Noam Chomsky* » (p. 7).
- &c « *I've learned that the key to getting through and appreciating an Antonioni film is to keep well in mind the fall that you're seeing an Antonioni film* » (p. 8-9).
- &c « *Harlin treats us to a stunning leading performance on the part of Jackson, nifty cinematography and editing and a terrific musical score* » (p. 10-11).

NOTES

- The cover features two pieces designed by Everett Ranni entitled Intense Content and There'll Be Plenty of Time to Sleep When I'm Done.*
- Artwork on pages 4 (One Dead Car), 9 (Universe of Thought) & 11 (Cloud) courtesy of Branko Vranic.*
- The triptych on page 7, entitled Do You Want Nuit Blanche or Do You Want the Truth? consists of photographs taken by Chris Heron on a Motorola Razr.*
- Last issue mistakenly reported our current volume number as being 44 rather than 43. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.*

The Innis Herald is published during the second full week of each month during the Fall and Winter terms.

All submissions are welcome.



Hardcore Vidal

DON Gillmour's comparative review of Gore Vidal and Norman Mailer, « *The Last Patriots* », which appeared in the September issue of *The Walrus*, was pretty deceptive with its oblique preference for Mailer, « *America itself* ». Vidal was something else. Obviously mature, a condenser of morals and the aphoristic. But the review skimmed over his fiction indiscriminately and since, as an author, his work should be used to characterize his fame, Gillmour didn't compare the authors so much as laminate them. Let's fix this.

Vidal was formally 21 when he published *Williwaw*. But as his recurring and unmathematical introduction, straight from the compendium *Essential Gore Vidal*, errs: « *Gore Vidal was born in 1925 at the US Military Academy at West Point. His first novel, Williwaw, appeared in the spring of 1946, when he was nineteen years old* ». For the age he was still prolific – and plain, adopting a bare style. *Williwaw* is unmemorable except for the North Pacific Ocean storm, the williwaw, actually hitting the ship. The particular phrase is best of all. Mid-paragraph, jarring, and standalone.

The prevalent biography in his next book – *In a Yellow Wood*, the first to come out (remember that phrase!) after his initiation in New York City – gives mere shadows of the people and places Vidal was inured with before he rejected them. The protagonist, Robert Holton, vacillates wisdom, spirit, and the vestiges of war in a cowardly insurance office. Vidal's choice of « *insurance office* » is a little too obvious.

One scene is notable. It consists of a triangular relationship at a high society cocktail party between Holton, Clara Bankton (Anais Nin, the pulp diarist to whom the book is dedicated), and George Robert Brown (certainly the obsequious Truman Capote, a Vidal nemesis) that proceeds to an odd scene at some queer bar. Clara and Robert are long lost lovers, sparking again. George Robert is the witless *fag* who, imposing himself, takes them to the queer haunt. The scene is redolent of Vidal's disgust with kitschy effeminacy and the queer shades render unsympathetic

protagonists. The depiction of a corpulent dancer tries to come off as raw. It manages this not quite.

For the desiccated style that pervades his work of this period, the writing in *The City and the Pillar* fits tightly into its themes of sex, the individual, the other, and a false society. If Jim Willard is a plain protagonist, it's only because the consciousness of his homosexuality seeps between the characters in the voice of the book. (Gillmour calls him « *a gay man* » – how wrongly!) The trip Willard takes through American society rotates on an early sexual encounter between Jim and Bob, his other half. From there the novel is adventurous and yet void. Everything waits for the final reconvention of Jim and Bob, next time in the city. In the original scene Jim kills Bob. I've never read that version.

Portions of the novel occurring in Guatemala and Hollywood create bejewelled moments for the characters, of course, since Jim never has significant moments going solo. He is defined by reaction. The locations are prescient for Vidal, too: he spent much of the 50's in and out of Hollywood and purchased a writing retreat in Guatemala shortly after the publication of *C&P*. It became his first bestseller.

This early success is not without manipulation that is best served by reviews like « *The Last Patriots* ». Vidal has actually revised the novel twice. First a 1968 version, and then another from 1995, published simultaneously with his memoir, *Palimpsest*, in which he plays the novel manifold tribute. In both versions the original ending is altered: Bob is raped, not killed.

It's this kind of thing that makes it hard to appreciate Vidal's precocity. The reader wants to appraise it but has no context. Leaving the original to posterity is just the authorly sort of thing to do, and Vidal fails to do it. The evidence of an ego can be too much sometimes, too much of a self-service to even read. His alleged superior form – as an essayist – elicits the worst Vidalian caricature. In his latest memoir, *Point-to-Point Navigation*, he plainly suggests that the Peace Corps was his idea vis-à-vis JFK (who

he knew), and that Frank Capra's career ended on his orders while Francis Ford Coppola owes another career to him entirely and so on. I once read him claim that queer studies was a discipline he « *invented* » with the publication of *C&P*.

In his later life he cannot resist playing – unconsciously, I suspect – the role of an old man exaggerating his youth. He refers to that crepuscular time as the « *golden age* » not only for him but American history. Suspicious correlations make the man. His nostalgia novel of the era, set right after WWII, is concocted so the protagonist meets a brilliant young author, Gore Vidal, in the book!

Aristophanes' explication of love is an important trope in his memoirs, if only because it reveals an important failure of Vidal's: his easy themes, his unintellectual conceptions at the start and finish of his works. *Lincoln*, which is his most prescriptive historical fiction, literally finishes with a summation of Vidal's historical view of the Civil War. And it's a shabby declamation for an otherwise porous characterization of the man. As John Hay, a main character, says for us on the second last page of the novel (656):

« *Mr. Lincoln had a far greater and more idyllic task than Washington's. You see, the Southern States had every Constitutional right to go out of the union. But Lincoln said, no. Lincoln said, this Union can never be broken. Now that was a terrible responsibility for one man to take. But he took it, knowing he would be obliged to fight the greatest war in human history, which he did, and which he won. So he not only put the Union back together again, but he made an entirely new country, and all of it in his own image* ».

This has been said before and doesn't need to be said again, let alone at the culmination of a fictionalized history. But Vidal would feel is ordained to write those books. They are meaty sermons – more useful than any of my textbooks in POL203, American Government and Politics. Still, they are slow reads. When he veers away from the moral, the remainder of his writing is witty and on. (The other way round his writing is never

witty, fun, or on at all; is a moral really any better? Gillmour makes this point in *The Walrus* very well). The exceptions, *Myra Breckinridge*, *Washington D.C.*, and, of course, *Julian*, were published one-after-the-other and form his artistic zenith in the 60's. Was his blood running after a failed attempt for a seat in the House of Representatives as Democrat for Poughkeepsie?

It is interesting how the quality of Vidal's writing metastasized before his arch through the 60's. He stopped writing novels for a while when he did TV work, also theatre and film scripts (none of them any good with the exception of his Gothic screen adaptation of *Suddenly, Last Summer*, featuring Elizabeth Taylor, homosexual cannibalism, and the name "Sebastian" wretched over and over again from its limber cast. I suspect the film is more successful on accord of its director, the sour J. Mankiewicz, than Vidal's histrionic screenplay).

A final peeve concerning this selection, which is utmost Vidal:

« *The novel being dead, there is no point to writing made up stories. Look at the French who will not and the Americans who cannot. Look at me who ought not, if only because I exist entirely outside the usual human experience...* »

Vidal's voice is high and literary here in *Myra Breckinridge*. I was surprised to see Gillmour devote more time to its « *desperately camp* » on-screen adaptation than its innovated first-person. What is a book review without a book? ■

MATT MALONE



A Brief Language Exercise

AS A third year language student in German, I feel I should share something about the practice of speaking. For in our third year, all language students of various stripes face evaluations, for the first time, about how they speak the language they chose to study. This could be a daunting task for most of us who muddled through first and second year courses purely on luck and a confusing meandering through the written and grammatical aspects of the language. But fortunately I've taken German ever since high school, and received some tips on speaking in a series of bewildering circumstances, which I will share here.

Around 2004, I and a couple of my classmates from my high school German class managed to get into the regional German contest held at Trent. We had gone through a month of review to prepare us for the various components of the contest, which were the standard reading, writing, grammatical, and speaking parts you would find in any language test. Everything was pretty straight forward for us at that point, not that we were particularly talented at German. But there at the speaking part of the contest there was a minor mishap. We had been told that the topic we were to discuss was travel, but that generally, they don't really care what

you say, just that you say it correctly. It was perfectly acceptable and probably even expected of us to blather and small talk onto topics that had absolutely nothing to do with the original topic, as long as it made some sort of sense.

When it was time for my verbal interview, for some reason they asked about my girlfriend. Nobody else who took the interview before me was asked about their girlfriends, and nobody who was interviewed after me got asked either.

Now, I didn't have a girlfriend at the time. Nor have I ever had a girlfriend. Or have a girlfriend now... but nonetheless, here's what I said (or at least, what I think I said, since this was originally in German. This is a rough translation):

My girlfriend and I have a very good relationship even though she's non-existent.

We kind of have a long-distance thing going; an inter-dimensional relationship, if you will, I being in the realm of the living, while she being immaterial. We would love to visit each other, but it's prohibitively expensive for her to visit me, and I could only visit her once.

We share many interests, but because she doesn't actually exist, I don't actually know what her interests are, or even if she has any. Although there is one

thing that I'm sure we have in common: I am interested in existing, and she is also interested in existing. We try to do that as much as possible.

My parents greatly approve of her even though they've never seen her, since I didn't impregnate her and would not be able to. But they greatly expect her to exist and for me to eventually bring her to dinner so that a marriage date can be arranged and she can start squeeze out grandkids. As for among ourselves, we still have to solve many issues before contemplating children, like whether they'll be raised Chinese or non-existent. It's difficult to broach on these subjects, since we can't, in fact, talk or meet with each other because of our dimensional differences. We're just taking it easy for now and seeing how the relationship goes.

We have perfect trust in each other, since my girlfriend practically, and actually don't exist. We understand in our new modern society that each individual need their private space where they can grow and flourish and we go to great lengths to accommodate that; in fact, my girlfriend has her own private dimension. I respect her privacy and she respects mine, and if there is anything that we need to talk about you can be sure we will be completely open and honest with each other, that is, when some means develop so we can actually speak with each other.

One thing that my girl-

friend and I argue about, however, are her friends: I don't approve of them and I wish they didn't exist. The fact that they don't actually exist just makes them worse. And I strongly suspect they would rather pretend I'm not there when I'm in the same room as them. That's hypothetically speaking, of course, since I can't actually exist in the same room as them, nor can they. But for my girlfriend's sake I tolerate her friends and try trust in her judgment.

All in all, I'm extremely lucky to be in this relationship, and if it ever stops existing I would be devastated. It would be as if something went missing; I would feel an empty hole besides me while I sleep - a big, hollow space where she used to not exist.

I think I got 14th place in the regional contest. I got a dictionary, and a very useful verb wheel. In any case, this kind of blathering is not just confined to German, or even to Languages. You can use it practically anywhere, and in other contexts it's known as Bullshitting, Pulling a Fast One, Being an Art Student, Tucking the Midnight Johnson, Growing Your Own Tooth and many others. Amateurs and veterans alike can employ this method to great effects in all sorts of environments, academic or otherwise. ■

ERIC ZHANG

It's a Wonderful Double Bill

WHO doesn't love a night of dinner, a movie and then some? As one who has often fallen victim to a date's idea of what constitutes the start of a "movie night to remember", I feel it is my duty to spread the word to anyone clueless as to their choices for such a night. Now there are many more titles that may create a night of a similar caliber, but my personal experience with the following two make them my favorites. Screw romantic comedies, these tried and true examples will leave your partner wanting more. Why trust the folks at the local video store when you've got the cream of the crop laid out right here in front of you?

My first recommendation is Brett Leonard's *Feed*. What better way to get close on the couch than by watching a horror movie? *Feed* is your ticket to an easy in. If a movie about a serial killer who does away with obese women by force feeding them and broadcasting it over the internet

doesn't do the trick, what has this world come to? Gluttons of the world beware, we've hit the third circle. In-between scenes of vomit, garbage bags of human fat and the force feeding of hamburgers, you should be able to fit in some snuggle time...given you're not too enchanted with the stunning plot line. Scores of directors have tried to create a horror film as romantic as *Feed*, but it appears that none have come close. Keep in mind however that some scenes may be a tad disturbing so it may be wise to keep a vomit bag close in case life imitates art. Don't worry though, it will be a great story to tell the kids, and it will only bring you closer together!

Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* is the second and perhaps best recommendation. Though one might conclude that *The Passion of Christ* rivals this Scorsese gem with regards to its date potential, they should be wary of such a bold statement. The latter film lacks a key

scene that makes that special someone just want to snuggle in close. Find me someone out there who doesn't get in the mood from watching Mary Magdalene get it on with good old Jesus and I'll give you a quarter. Hell, I'll give you a dollar. Your date will just eat it up, especially if they went to Catholic school. For so many reasons I believe this is one of the finest date movies of all time. I mean, if Jesus can be tempted, your odds with your couch-mate are pretty high.

If you really want to wow that special someone, here lies another secret weapon: cook dinner for your date. A box of KD for dinner and Eggo Waffles for dessert anyone? I don't know a sane person that wouldn't enjoy a culinary masterpiece such as that. Slaving away in the kitchen for hours will show them that you truly care. Paired with the excellent films you'll be viewing, your night can't be anything but a success. However, a word of caution is necessary. Be

confident that you truly want a future with this person, because after a night as magical as this, they'll keep coming back for more. ■

MICHELLE KLOEPFER



Le Géant de la Chanson au Québec

PAS de chemin pour s'y rendre, un bateau tous les quinze jours, un avion entre les tempêtes, la pêche, le trappage, c'est Natashquan. De ce petit village perdu sur la côte Nord du Québec, s'est levé le nouveau géant de la poésie, le symbole de la simplicité retrouvée. C'est Gilles Vigneault sorti de son pays de réalité et de rêve, de joies et de peines, pays de son enfance, de ses amours, de ses souvenirs.

Gilles Vigneault naquit en 1928 d'une famille modeste. Il poursuivit ses études classiques et à quatorze ans il fait la découverte de la poésie en lisant *Le Cid*. C'est en 1950 qu'il entre à l'Université Laval à Québec pour obtenir une licence en lettres. Il devient professeur et ce n'est qu'en

1960 que Vigneault commence une réelle carrière de gigueur, conteur, compositeur et chanteur. En 1959 il édite son premier recueil de poèmes *Etraves* où il nous parle de son dialogue avec la mer. En 1961 paraît un recueil qui comprend quarante récits, « *Contes sur la pointe des pieds* ». En 1964 paraît « *Balises* » recueil de poésie. Puis en 1965 « *Avec les vieux mots* » et « *Quand les bateaux s'en vont* ».

Le grand talent de ce chanteur-compositeur se devait de dépasser les frontières de ce pays. En 1964 sa chanson *Jack Monoloy* remporte le deuxième prix du quatrième festival international de la chanson en Pologne. En 1965 la chanson *Mon Pays* se mérite le premier prix au même festival. Notre Vigneault atteint ici un

sommet de sa carrière. Il nous communique sa façon d'être de vivre avec les hommes. Il nous dit son pays qui est le nôtre. Ses principaux thèmes, sa musique, tout contribue à introduire chez le public qui l'écoute, une atmosphère de tendresse de chaleur humaine. Car ce Gilles Vigneault mène la salle du bout de sa poésie vivante et colorée. La salle s'est reconnue. Il lui a donné une chance, un prétexte pour s'identifier.

De tous les chansonniers, Vigneault est certainement le plus prestigieux actuellement. Avec tous ses personnages légendaires dont il chante la vie, la force et la grandeur, il est en train de créer une nouvelle mythologie. Il s'est fait l'interprète de tous ces hommes de la côte Nord devenue pour nous un

véritable Olympe.

Vigneault pour nous, québécois, c'est un mythe, un véritable symbole. Il incarne le désir collectif du peuple canadien de s'affirmer, de faire valoir sa langue et ses traditions. Il sait si bien animer nos grands paysages que nous adhérons par le fait même à sa poésie, à son personnage. Vigneault recrée l'époque où se plaît à se retrouver chacun de nous. Dans une interview lors de sa tournée à Paris, Vigneault disait lui-même: « *Peut-être que le public se reconnaît en moi, qu'il vient s'applaudir lui-même, parce qu'au bout de ma chanson est mon pays. Je chante parce que j'ai quelque chose à dire et je chante ceux qui travaillent à contraindre le pays* ».

SANDRA GRANT





Are you going to keep alive the spirit of cricket?

IT'S

hard to imagine how my expectations could have been any higher for the blink-and-you-miss-it Chris Corsano show on September 9th. It was only weeks prior to that, upon listening to Cold Bleak Heat's *Simitu*, that I was reminded how nice it would be to finally see the extremely talented young free improvisational drummer after what seems like an eternity of waiting. That the show was at the Tranzac, a premiere venue for a show such as this, was merely further indication that the various celestial bodies had aligned as perfectly as could be imagined.

Corsano has mentioned that it was seeing free artists such as William Parker, Harry Pussy, No-Neck Blues Band and future co-conspirator Paul Flaherty live that propelled him on his current trajectory, and when listening to Corsano's work it's hard not to imagine that he's inspiring younger musicians in the same way.

With jazz music in a steady decline with regard to finding young listeners, Corsano's rock roots leading him to a frenzied locus between free noise or free rock and jazz not only aptly describes his own overarching sound, but hopefully testifies to the accessibility of exploring the vibrant elements that made free jazz free from a wide range of background interests; free improvisation, as Flaherty/Corsano cheekily acknowledge in their debut's title *The Hated Music*, is sometimes saddled with a unjustly bad name.

The spectrum of sound that Corsano engages in both personally and collaboratively is linked by its passion and ingenuity, regardless of genre. The gut reaction to Corsano's playing is its most initially powerful aspect, but it's not long before you find yourself mentally and physically engaged in his brilliant command of dynamics, both in how he plays and what he plays. This includes his incredible ability to coalesce with his collaborators without ever sounding rote, overstated or overly passive.

Cold Bleak Heat's *Simitu* is no exception. Cold Bleak Heat consists of frequent Corsano collaborator Paul Flaherty (alto/tenor saxophone), Greg Kelley (trumpet) and Matt Heyner (acoustic bass), and is a valuable entry point into the Corsano discography, especially due to the presence of Flaherty: an important fixture in the young drummer's work. The sophomore release from the quartet presents a more pervasive atmosphere than the debut, though there is no blast lost. Kelley's shading is of immediate note, his abrasive leanings on the previous effort restrained or recalibrated, occasionally at the fore in emphasizing the melodic bent of the group. Similarly, the interplay between Corsano and Heyner is increasingly effective as both bedrock and instigator, guiding and replying as ably as any pairing within the quartet.

Apart from these refinements, the hallmarks of the group return: rich, satisfyingly

lengthy pieces with an additively associative approach, flying from one fractured genre to the next with a contagious excitement. The relationships between each player are never understated, always communicative and complimentary. Each of these remarkable traits is on display throughout the album, but no more completely in one piece than on « *Mugged By a Glacier* », as close to a single representative statement as can be hoped for by such an active and amorphous group.

Considered amidst his duo with Mick Flower, who he appears alongside again on Vi-bracathedral Orchestra's *Wisdom Thunderbolt*, his turn with Heyner and Loren Connors as the infamous Jandek's support on *Manhattan Tuesday* and highly-visible appearances on Björk's latest, *Volta*, 2007 may seem to be an impressive year for Corsano. In reality, though, it's only keeping consistent an already incredibly impressive career. That *Simitu* is the most accomplished Corsano release from this year is to say nothing ill of the other works, as it's likely to be topped before the year's end.

It is the Björk appearance specifically, though, that occasioned the show at the Tranzac, as it fell between her Toronto and Detroit dates. The proximity of Buffalo's Steve Baczkowski is also a factor, as the two reunited to play as a duo for the set. I had heard the men play together only once before, as part of a trio with Flaherty on *The Dim Bulb*. With the many number of Corsano's works that I've had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with in mind, including said release, it is still difficult to describe how swiftly and completely he was able to meet and exceed any and all expectations at first burst. Fittingly, once in the energetic full swing, my proximity to the kit afforded me the opportunity to be literally blown away. It was just as much a privilege to have so incredible a pairing. The charm and excitement of Baczkowski's playing knew no bound, meeting Corsano perfectly through each of their dynamic shifts in tone and instrument, including inspired use of ragged electronics among many interesting tools.

Primarily on baritone saxophone, Baczkowski played with a fire throughout the set that was immediately noticeable through his insistent pelvic thrusts: the pre-cognitive physical appeal of the music was certainly a highlight of the performance, expert playing notwithstanding, as it resulted in persistent smiles and hollers from the audience throughout the long (we were quite insistent on an encore from the two) and varied set. The overall effect was peerless, drawing in those passing by curious at the insistent energy emanating from the venue. Many stayed, paying their due in what was consistently the warmest ovation that I've witnessed in quite some time. Whether on record or in live performance, there are few things more surely rewarding than Chris Corsano. ■

CHRIS HERON



Does Everyone Know What a Kuffiyeh Is?

AS A cinephile, I generally live in the dark. What really gets my goat is when people turn on the light. Not only does it bring me back to reality, but it also generally shows, in plain view, my ignorance of all things current or cool (« cool » - do people even use that anymore? You see my point).

In my not-so-distant memory, the said situation is easily recognized. This time, the culprit was a scarf. « A scarf ? » you may say, but good readers, this is no ordinary scarf. It is a kuffiyeh. The point, as my loyal and politically knowledgeable friend informed me, is that, « Alexia, it's not just a scarf, it's a political statement ! » My reaction in order to maintain my mildly pretentious film student disposition: « Yeah, I know, of course I know. But I don't have time to get into it. I'm going to see a documentary about the situation in Israel between the Israelis and the Palestinians at Brunswick Theatre ». (Okay, so I realize the comment is unbelievably idiotic now, but at the time, I thought, « Damn, I dodged that one brilliantly! Me - one, scarf - zero »)

Fortunately or unfortunately - depending on whom you ask - I did not dodge my ignorant comment for long. As I sat in the packed Brunswick Theatre to watch *Occupation 101*, I progressed through various stages of understanding. From stage one - ig-

norant and pleased with life, to stage two - ignorant and displeased with life, to stage three - bawling my eyes out for a Palestinian child, to stage four - bawling my eyes out for being ignorant, to lastly the most efficient stage five - deciding to make sure others were not as ignorant as myself.

Occupation 101 by Abdallah and Sufyan Omeish is an outstanding documentary; it was a history lesson, an academic essay, an award winner and an entertaining movie all around. It covered a solid range of topics: the first wave of Jewish immigration from Europe in the 1880's, the 1920 tensions, the 1948 war, the 1967 war, the first Intifada of 1987, the Oslo Peace Process, Settlement expansion, the role of the United States Government, the second Intifada of 2000, the separation barrier and the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. The film details the painful accounts of different families and children who are not allowed the fundamental freedoms which as Canadians we take for granted.

What was most startling for me was that this perspective was truly one I was not aware of. It was not simply cleverly edited footage or a Michael Moore-esque Op-ed rant; the information conveyed through this film was well founded and backed up by a number of journalists and academics, by Palestinian and Jew-

ish figures alike. The film was almost an antithesis of everything I have ever heard about the Israel/Palestine situation from popular news. I realize that so much of the media today is tainted by the government, corporations and network executives, but that as a Canadian, in a country where there is supposed to be freedom of information, the fact that I was entirely unaware of any of this was just more than I could handle.

While I was watching the movie, one of the most astonishing lines was from a testimony of a Palestinian man who was reiterating the point that if only someone knew, they would do something. As an Armenian, I felt like the stories I was hearing were exactly like the stories I heard from my family about the Armenian Genocide. For many Armenians, that idea is one which is still very raw in our minds. Sometimes, people who know don't do anything until it is very late. It's a scary thought, but one that is not hard to fathom. As university students, we are often busy with essays, readings and « our lives », but there is also an opportunity in our lives where we have a chance to be richly informed by alternative modes of media.

Now, don't get me wrong: I'm lazy, horribly and utterly lazy, and as much as my heart goes out to the

people of the world, it's not like one documentary is going to make me Noam Chomsky (he's cool and in the movie) or Mother Teresa (not in the movie, still cool). But, damn it, I will try a little. Really, we know if we all tried a little more, the world would be so much more peaceful, and so much less ignorant.

For anyone who is still confused about the Kuffiyeh, it represents solidarity with the plight of the Palestinian people. Originally worn by Yasser Arafat, western protesters wear differing styles and shades of kuffiyeh - the most prominent being the black-and-white. This is typically worn around the neck like a neckerchief, simply knotted in the front with the fabric allowed to drape over the back. So, now that you know, my non-ignorant reader, when you see someone wearing it because they thought they were scenerfester and bought it at Claire's, tell them what they are wearing, and maybe at the very least you can make sure they are not just ignorant like me. If anything, you can go see *Occupation 101* and figure out what you think. After all, as the Stephan Hawking quote in the trailer so aptly puts it, « The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance; it's the illusion of knowledge ».

ALEXIA CITAK



- ANNOUNCEMENT -

The Cinema Studies Undergraduate journal, Camera Stylo, is accepting submissions for its 8th edition. The purpose of Camera Stylo is to promote cinema studies at the undergraduate level and provide an opportunity for undergraduate students to publish their work related to film.

Submissions must be approved by a faculty member and should not exceed 4000 words (approximately 15 pages).

Submission deadline is Friday, January 18th, 2008 at 5PM. Questions and submissions should be sent to: camerastylo@gmail.com.



Three Fallen Masters

THIS past summer, the world lost three of its most gifted talents in filmmaking. The following are personal reflections on certain films that I will remember each director best for.

Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007) was without a doubt one of the most important living filmmakers in the world before his death on July 30th, 2007. He was to cinema what Mozart was to music, Dickens to literature and Da Vinci was to painting – that is, he represented to many the absolute pinnacle of perfection in his medium. Those who may (foolishly) argue that cinema is one of the lesser arts obviously haven't given masterworks such as *The Seventh Seal*, *Wild Strawberries*, *The Virgin Spring*, *Cries and Whispers* and *Fanny and Alexander* their due consideration. I believe that one of the main reasons why Bergman was such a master was his complete control over his craft; his manipulation of film imagery is so careful and precise that many moments in his films transcend to the level of poetry – of pure cinema. How else can you describe the delicate snowfall after the rape and murder of the young girl in *The Virgin Spring*? Or the look of pain and misery on Harriet Andersson's face as she awakens in the opening scene of *Cries and Whispers*? These moments, always gorgeously framed and pulsating with emotion and feeling, can hold a viewer in a state of complete enrapture, casting such a spell that its power grips the undivided attention of the viewer. Of the many films in the late director's oeuvre, there is one in particular that is one of his best demonstrations of this cinematic poetry, and made a lasting impression on me from the first time I saw it: 1966's *Persona*.

I first saw the film in the winter of my first year at U of T, in Innis College's Introduction to Film Studies course. Jeff, a good friend from high school, was in town at the time and tagged along with me to the screening. We were both curious to see this highly-regarded staple of art cinema, and really didn't quite know what to expect. At the time, the only other Bergman film I had seen was that iconic, legendary work, *The Seventh Seal*. I think nothing, however, could have prepared me for the unique and groundbreaking film that is *Persona*. It was a mesmerizing viewing experience to say the least, beautifully presenting its story of two women (Bibi Andersson and Liv Ullmann) trapped in a brutal power struggle for identity in stunning black-and-white photography (thanks to Bergman's longtime cinematographer Sven

Nykvißt). One of the boldest aspects of the film is its experimentation with the cinematic medium itself, best demonstrated in its opening sequence, which assaults the viewer with a barrage of images such as carbon lights firing up, crude fragments of animation and silent film skits, stiff bodies adorning what appears to be a morgue (especially memorable for the way the camera captures the shapely grey geography of the corpses' hands and faces) and a sickly-looking boy grasping at the shifting images of the film's two heroines projected on a wall. It is a passage that tecters into the avant-garde, driving into the viewers' minds the fact that they are watching an artificial work. This type of self-reflexivity persists throughout *Persona*, allowing the film to use a variety of bold effects that underline the questions of identity it raises (as seen in the scene where a monologue given by Andersson is shown with the camera focusing exclusively on Ullmann and her reactions as she listens, then is repeated with the camera on Andersson as she speaks, and the infamous moment immediately afterwards when both women's faces are combined into one grotesquely mishpash though not wholly uneven mask).

It was an odd experience walking out of Innis College into the cold, slushy streets of Toronto with Jeff after the screening. We mumbled responses and reactions to one another (« good » and « interesting » being among them), but I think *Persona* is one of those rare films to which the term « indescribable » truly applies; it is best appreciated when viewed in peace, then mulled over in the viewer's mind for an adequate amount of time afterwards, yielding any number of different interpretations and ideas.

It was only until recently, to honor Bergman's death, that I saw *Persona* for the first time since that screening in February, 2005. Like most of Bergman's films, it lingered in my mind over the years like a strange dream, and every now and then, I would recall one of its many memorable images (especially when I was watching a film that generously pays homage to it, such as *Mulholland Dr.*). The fact that a film has such power so long after my first viewing of it is truly a mark of its greatness and the high level of craftsmanship invested in it by its director. Though Ingmar Bergman has passed on, his films will continue to haunt, mesmerize and linger in countless other viewers' minds for the years to come.

Admittedly, Michelangelo Antonioni (1912-2007) was more of a mixed bag for me. Like many

people, the first film of his that I saw was also his most popular one: *Blow-Up*. I thought it was alright, but it wasn't until much later, when I saw it for the third or fourth time that I began to truly appreciate it. Since then, I've learned that the key to getting through and appreciating an Antonioni film is to keep well in mind the fact that you're seeing an Antonioni film. A few rules apply: landscapes and objects are given at least as much attention and significance as the characters (if not more); the main characters are lonely, discontented and lost individuals; no shot composition or camera movement should be underestimated. Antonioni's films are the very definition of art cinema, and while they can often wear thin many a viewer's patience, they can also, like Bergman's films, impart something deep and memorable. However, while my memories of Bergman's films closely resemble the seamless dreams that they would often be modeled after, those of Antonioni's works are more fragmented and isolated (which is fitting when considering the difference in flavor between the two directors' films: Bergman's emotional explorations into the human soul versus Antonioni's colder image-based essays on alienation). Among them can be counted *L'Avventura*'s vacationers making their way across the rocky island where they search for their missing friend Anna; the poisoned industrial wastelands of *Red Desert* as well as the film's idyllic fantasy sequence which conjures up a desert island amid sparkling sapphire waters; the ever-so-slow shot at the end of *The Passenger* where the camera exits Jack Nicholson's room through a barred window to emerge into the dusty outside world; David Hemmings exorcising his voyeuristic demons in a furious photo shoot with a skeletal model and later, frantically searching for the truths hidden within his photographs with a magnifying glass in *Blow-Up*.

This assortment of scenes indicates how Antonioni was more an artist of images than of dialogue, of character types than of characters and of themes than of stories. These opaque characteristics could be interpreted as weaknesses on Antonioni's part (Ingmar Bergman once criticized *L'Avventura*, saying that Antonioni didn't know where to put the camera or what he was even trying to express), yet they also add a quality associated with painting to the filmmaker and his work. Like abstract paintings, Antonioni's films can be admired for their visual beauty, contemplated for long periods of time and open to different interpretations depending on

the viewer. Regardless of your personal opinion of Antonioni, there's no denying he was a unique visionary force in cinema who deserves respect and remembrance.

Finally, we come to a director who may not have been as famous as Bergman or Antonioni, but who was no less skilled or important to his country's national cinema. He was Edward Yang (1947-2007), a member of the so-called Taiwanese New Wave, which also includes such directors as Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Tsai Ming-Liang. The first film of his I saw was *The Terrorizers* (in the Contemporary Chinese Cinemas class I took in second year), which I must admit was rather slow for my liking. Like Antonioni, Yang had a style which moves at its own pace, yet his films offer a sense of warmth that is hard to come by when viewing Antonioni's movies. This warmth is especially present in *Yi Yi* (A One and a Two), Yang's last film and one of the first genuine masterpieces of the new millennium.

While *Yi Yi* can be considered one of the greatest cinematic family portraits ever made, most of the film ironically depicts the individual family members in their own social spheres, isolated from the others. This family is comprised of the quiet father NJ who, throughout the film, must deal with both his misjudged business partners and Sherry, an old flame who he bumps into after 30 years, his wife Min-Min who undergoes an emotional breakdown (due in part to her mother going into a coma) and runs off to a spiritual retreat party through the film; their teenage daughter Ting-Ting who experiences both first love and the breaking of a friendship as a consequence; and the precocious young son Yang-Yang who carries out a series of delightful experiments with his surroundings throughout the film, including one concerning the delicate art of filling a pink water balloon and another, more famously, with a camera that he uses to help people see what they normally cannot (such as the backs of their own heads). There is also Issy Ogata's Mr. Ota, who has some of the best scenes in the film, including an outing to a karaoke bar where, with the help of Beethoven's « Moonlight Sonata », he demonstrates the universal power of music (a motif which resonates throughout the film, including its English title).

Yi Yi is a film constructed of subtleties, the kinds that layer and enrich everyday life. It is filled with great little moments that are simply magical, flowing with the course of both the film and these characters'.



lives while never feeling artificial or tacked on. In the film's final scene, Yang-Yang recites a speech at his grandmother's funeral in which he announces his ambition to « *tell people things they don't know and show them stuff they haven't seen* ». While that could be interpreted as the perfect job description for a filmmaker, one could argue that Yang has accomplished the opposite with *Yi Yi*: he has shown us things that we know all too well and see all too often in our lives, but aren't appreciated as much as they should. Hopefully the people who see *Yi Yi* will widen their senses of appreciation and, in doing so, make the most of a great director's final gift to the world. ■

MARC SAINT-CYR

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Notes From the Festival

ROLLA TAHIR
CHRIS HERON
TOM LATKOWSKI
MARC SAINT-CYR

Chacun son cinéma ou Ce petit coup au cœur quand la lumière s'éteint et que le film commence. This is another film anthology by world renowned auteurs – if you will – who have been commissioned by the Cannes Film Festival to each make a 3-minute film about their prospects on cinema in honor of its 60th anniversary. Cronenberg proves that he's not only a great director, but a great actor as well. Wang Kar-Wai proves that he can make your stomach cringe with passion in *The Mood for Love* style even with a tight time frame in a 3-minute short. Youssef Chahine proves that you can make an autobiography in 3 minutes. In an homage to silent slapstick, Elia Sulziman returns to the primitives of cinema, in a film starring himself in a silent role as a Buster Keaton type of character. Lars Von Trier was finally able to make a film that cinema goers will be able to relate to; it gives a whole new meaning to the phrase, « *Don't you hate those annoying people who can't hold their comments for until after the film?* » When watching the film, try not to be so overly critical, and it'll make you smile from here to there, from beginning to end. My only regret is that the film didn't include David Lynch's film. RT

Les Chansons d'amour is a French musical that has propelled people to talk about it in comparison to Jacques Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. Chansons are not the words-for-songs musical that Cherbourg was, but it is similarly unconventional; it doesn't incorporate elaborate dance numbers and lavish set designs, but is instead quite simple in its execution. The film's charm lies in its story. A story, it will suffice to say, about confused youth: confused about love, confused about sex, confused about friendship – confused about life. RT

Talking about *Chaos*, I will shift my focus from the film to the filmmaker, because a lot of people don't know who he is to begin with. Youssef Chahine is an Egyptian filmmaker who's been directing films for almost six decades and is considered a master. His last film – *Alexandria, New York* – was shown in Cannes Film Festival, as have other films of his in previous years. His films are both highly personal and socially charged. He's not representative of Egyptian cinema, yet in a way, he should be. That's not to say that every filmmaker should adopt Chahine's world-views, but that they should be just as daring in their approach to filmmaking. The lesson to be learned here is that film should not be used solely for mindless entertainment purposes, but as a medium for social reflection and change. His take on social taboos – in *Chaos*, mainly corrupt police authorities – for the most part subjected him to ridicule from Egyptian critics and praise from Western ones. His films are not aesthetically revolutionary, but they're very ideologically charged, which is something missing from Egyptian cinema. In general, films like his that attempt to deal with social/political/cultural taboos

seem to be too scared to end on a note other than « *... and they lived happily ever after* », which doesn't solve anything. Nevertheless, it's a step in the right direction. RT

Renny Harlin, the Finnish-born master of action, brings us his latest project this year: a fresh, exciting thriller starring Samuel L. Jackson, Ed Harris, Eva Mendes, and Luis Guzmán. When I sat down at the Cumberland last month to see *Cleaner*, I was expecting an average flick where Jackson would go on some ballistic killing spree against the bad guys (say, Jules Winnfield meets Leon the Professional). Instead, I was treated to a deep, unique, and well-crafted piece of cinema.

Jackson plays Tom Carver, a former cop who cleans scenes of murder and death. As a widower, he also takes care of his daughter (and vice versa). Harris and Guzmán star as Jackson's old buddies from the force. Mendes plays the wife of a man whose not-yet-reported murder Carver cleans up. Thereafter, Carver is accused of the murder and sets out to find the truth in an exhilarating tale of suspense and corruption that (as expected) concludes with a twist.

Some might say that *Cleaner* merely presents itself as a typical, extended episode of *CSI*. On the contrary, the film provides an engaging plot that touches upon fundamental emotions associated with losing a loved one, tensions among family and friends, as well as Harlin's frequently recurring consideration of racial and gender roles (note that Ed Harris is the only « *white* » male among the principal cast, and I won't spoil his role and fate in the film either). In addition, Harlin treats us to a stunning leading performance on the part of Jackson, nifty cinematography and editing and a terrific musical score.

Though *Cleaner* is gory in the sense that Jackson is often seen Windex-ing pools of blood, the film is actually far from violent. Throughout the entire 90 or so minutes of the film, all Jackson does is throw somebody onto a glass table and (only) one or two gunshots occur overall. Hence, those audience members who expect to see sequences of high-adrenaline action and showers of blazing bullets in *Cleaner* will, in fact, have their fortunes quenched.

Cleaner is scheduled for release sometime this Fall and, though it may not garner the top spot at the box office, I strongly recommend that movie-goers see it (in a theatre!). My only regret is that Harlin, as well as his screenwriter and the dozen producers for that matter, did not devise a more original and captivating title for the film. TL

Encounters at the End of the World is a revelation; who knew watching a documentary about Antarctica could be incredibly entertaining, beautiful and not to mention funny – seriously. Swearing that he won't do another movie about penguins, Herzog takes on the project of documenting the lives – and sometimes, the absurdities – of its inhabitants. It

seems to be the « *it* » gathering place for those who lost their place in this world or couldn't find it to begin with. A critic once said that Herzog has a knack of portraying « *madmen, visionaries and outcasts* ». The protagonists of *Encounters* are best described as all three. Herzog and his crew of two – himself and the cinematographer – manage to make the most seemingly banal of places, like Antarctica, look so beautiful that you'll think twice before taking your next vacation. It is clear that Herzog shows a great deal of interest in Antarctica and its subjects. Still, I sensed an unmistakable sarcasm in his voice over. I'll let you judge for yourself where the film stands on the « *issue* » of scientific exploration; it was the reason this film resonated so well with me. RT

Winner of the Grand Prix at Cannes, *The Mourning Forest* details the journey – naturally both literal and metaphorical – of a young caregiver and a problematic elderly patient. The relationships the two had previously shared with their lost love ones vis-à-vis their new roles at the facility produces an intriguing dynamic for the film to explore. Machiko's profession requires a level of maternal care reminiscent of that once administered to her dead son, while in the mind of Shigeki, her name and domestic servitude easily conjures up images of Mako, his deceased wife. Though in seemingly similar stations of mourning, the contrast in how the two approach their emotional sensitivity provides a range of affecting situations, notably a hilariously odd game of hide and seek. These moments culminate in a significantly unavoidable (though not unanticipated) confrontation of mourning strategies, so to speak, which extends from the internal to the external world and is starkly volatile within the otherwise minimalist film. This juxtaposition provides occasion for the most deeply felt moments, spotlighting the rich performances that, like the beautiful cinematography, had hitherto been so consistent in their subtlety. If it can be said that this passage approaches catharsis, that is to take nothing away from the meditative power that exists throughout, making the whole film as compelling as the climax is rewarding. CH

Ne touchez pas la hache sees Rivette return to Balzac's work, which in the past has served as a launching point to varying degrees, and is adapted here in the more traditional manner. The story considers the nuance of courtship through the lens of the 19th century as the playful Duchesse de Langeais engages the wooden Armand de Montreuil, a returning General with exotic tales of heroism that has earned him valuable social currency. It is this milieu and the magnification of its procedure that provides the main point of interest. Each play is presented for our analysis through the studied pace of the film, the possible outcomes contemplated along with the players, while the tragic frame of the story de-emphasizes the story's conclusion by alluding



to it early on.

Critical distance is further engendered both in the abstract presence of intertitles, as well as more overtly in their content. « *If the previous scene was the civil period in this sentimental war, this is the religious one* », reads one, the correlative conjunction reminding the viewer of the necessity of a reading while also underlining the formality of the subject. Within the context of this strict, irrational social decorum, the relatively action-oriented climax and finale scenes paired with their outcomes are representative of what we may view in hindsight as an overall ineffectiveness, one which Rivette, in this latest re-enactment, captures quite ably. *CH*

Paranoid Park, the latest film from Gus Van Sant, sees the director going in the same creative direction he started on in films like *Elephant* and *Last Days* to great effect. Based on a young adult novel by Blake Nelson, the *Crime and Punishment*-esque narrative focuses on a high school boy who accidentally causes the death of a security officer near the eponymous skateboarder hangout in his suburban neighbourhood. Beautifully photographed by Christopher Doyle and Kathy Li, the film ably blends together moments of profound emotion, light-hearted whimsy (conjured by well-deployed snippets from Fellini film soundtracks) and quiet contemplation into a seamless, completely immersive experience. Deserving to be ranked among Van Sant's best films, *Paranoid Park* is an impeccably crafted masterpiece. *MSC*

Ping Pong Playa is every bit as funny as its title. It's about a teenager who is as confused as the title: a Chinese wannabe basketball player who is stuck coaching ping-pong to a few neighborhood nerds and losers. The teenager is Christopher 'C Dub' Wang, and his sidekick is a business mogul wannabe JP Money. With a soundtrack that is as enjoyable and informative as the characters themselves, the film is a guaranteed gem. You know a film is good when it employs the most banal of conventional techniques, like slow motion during a climatic game point, and you don't squirm. It's so refreshing and new, yet so familiar. Perhaps it's because the film flips mainstream archetypes - it's no longer the African-American guy from the hood who wants to make it big in the NBA, à la too-numerous-to-mention Hollywood films. It's a Chinese guy from the suburbs. *RT*

Brian De Palma's *Redacted* doesn't feel like a film, perhaps because of its heavy reliance on digital technology

that is so familiar to us - i.e. Youtube. As the title suggests, it's a reaction to modern media reportage, be it on Fox, BBC or Al Jazeera. The film is based on actual events that took place recently in Iraq involving the murder of an Iraqi teenager and her family after raping her in her own house. It's not a documentary, but it's not fiction either; it's something in between, a mix of both perhaps, which results in a deadly combination. The fiction or imagined parts of the film are not far from the truth, partly because they are as horrific as what has already happened - namely the murder and rape. Featuring an unknown cast, brilliant performances nonetheless, the film doesn't rely on an all-star cast. It doesn't pledge allegiances to either side, but asks only for reflection. A brilliant move, which could have been solely an aesthetic choice, was the use of a surveillance camera on an army camp in Iraq to reveal a secret conversation between two troopers involved in the murder. Surveillance is prevalent in films (recently, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *D.O.A.R.*) as a means of uncovering terrorism. In *Redacted*, however, the tables are turned, and the surveillance cameras capture a different, previously unexposed kind of terrorism - that which happens in the midst of American army camps. *RT*

Son of Rambow is a hilarious insight on childhood, friendship and Rambo! Sounds cheesy? It's not one bit, I promise. This is another feature from director Garth Jennings who hilariously brought Douglas Adams' book *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* to life. When an audience member asked him how much of the film was true, he responded by saying that it's a film about how he remembers the world of his childhood, rather than how it truly was. During the Q&A (which, by the way, felt like stand up comedy!), he hilariously explained the process of acquiring the rights of the Rambo clips used in the film by writing a letter to Sylvester Stallone beginning « *Dear Mr. Stallone* ». Featuring two mind-blowing performances from first time(!) actors, really cool illustrations, a wide selection of supporting characters (watch out for the French actor-wannabe exchange student) and the unrelenting innocence of its execution, the film is perfect in every respect. *RT*

The Visitor, Thomas McCarthy's second feature film after *The Station Agent* is similar in its dealing with loneliness, this time with a subtle political twist that, surprisingly, doesn't take center

stage. Richard Jenkins plays a widowed university professor, whom upon returning to his New York pied-à-terre finds it already occupied by a young illegal immigrant couple. The film approaches the issue of immigration and deportation not in a political manner, but in a humanely manner. Sounds very sentimental? It is. But it is also different - it's simply that not everything is political. The film never really offers a solution - how could it? It merely conveys its frustration at the system through Jenkins' character, whom we come to relate to. *RT*

Le voyage du ballon rouge, Hou Hsiao-hsien's first film made outside of Asia, uses the Albert Lamorisse film *Le Ballon rouge* (1956) as a departure point for an elegantly pensive sketch of a family befitting its source and Parisian setting. Juliette Binoche stars alongside youngster Simon Iteanu as Suzanne and Simon, a disjointed though affectionate mother and son who hire a nanny (Shu Qi as Song) in an effort to achieve some stability in their lives. The story is at once content, wistful and stressful, reflecting the teetering nature of the newly configured familial unit and making for swift movement between awkward and charming, often resting at comfortably calm. In her introductory remarks, Binoche was quick to emphasize the freedom afforded due to the loose improvisational shooting style of Hsiao-hsien, who provided but an outline for each scene. She remarked how this mode fit the lack of acting (in the sense of artifice) involved in Simon's turn, a highlight of the film, just as it is perfectly suited for the ultimate collection of sketches that constitutes the story.

Like the titular balloon, these moments are not necessarily charged with specific meanings. Each scene resembles strokes in a painting: they are immediately connected in an overall purpose, but do not take shape until considered well after each is first made. The disconnected structure gives the impression that what we see has occurred in the past and is only now recalled. The retroactive symbolism inherent to memories is certainly present, or, in a more modern reconfiguration, perhaps we witness the unraveling of natural snapshots of video captured for a modern form of diary - footage similar to the keepsakes Song routinely records on her digital camera throughout the film. In either sense, the process is afforded lush cinematography that alongside its excellent performances and captivating story makes the process of remembering (and revisiting) an enjoyable affair. *CH*

